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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 000238

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SUBJECT: IRANIAN FM MOTTAKI'S VISIT TO LISBON

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Classified By: pol/econ counselor Matt Harrington for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶1. (C) According to an MFA diplomatic advisor, during a one-day visit to Lisbon by Iranian FM Mottaki on January 23, FM Amado urged his counterpart to take steps to restore the international community's trust and to act responsibly as a key player in the Middle East, and he publicly welcomed the agreement in Berlin earlier in the week on the text of a new UN Security Council Resolution. Mottaki insisted privately that Iran was fully cooperating with the IAEA, and he said publicly there would be no need for another UNSCR given Iran's full cooperation. Mottaki was upbeat about security progress in Iraq but expressed deep pessimism about the "Talibanization" of Pakistan, and he claimed President Bush's recent trip to the Middle East had strengthened Iran's standing in the region. An Amado advisor said there was little the Portuguese government could do to control collaboration between Portugal's largest oil and gas company with Iranian counterparts, given the lack of a UN prohibition on such commerce and the fact that many EU member states have substantial business interests in Iran. End Summary

¶2. (C) As promised by FM Amado (reftel), his diplomatic advisor, Paulo Lourenco, on January 25 provided pol/econ counselor a readout of Iranian FM Mottaki's discussions in Lisbon two days earlier. According to Lourenco, Mottaki and Amado met one-on-one for 30 minutes, followed by a joint press conference and a subsequent lunch with five-person delegations on each side.

One-on-One

¶3. (C) The two foreign ministers discussed only two topics in their tete-a-tete, according to Lourenco: Iran's nuclear enrichment program and Lebanon. On the first issue, Mottaki insisted the world had nothing to fear from Iran's enrichment program, claiming that Tehran has cooperated fully with the IAEA and would share remaining details requested by the nuclear agency by the March deadline. Amado in turn emphasized that trust was the key issue for the international community, and Tehran had work to do to establish it.

¶4. (C) Commenting to us that "we are well aware of Iran's efforts to poison regional stability," Lourenco said Amado expressed concern about developments in Lebanon. He noted to Mottaki that Portugal maintained an army engineering company there as part of the UN PKO, and that Lebanon was a

test case for the Middle East, particularly on the need for political coexistence. In what Lourenco said was a veiled reference to Iran, Amado underscored that "every party" must make an effort to find a solution to the political stalemate.

"Everyone thinks you're part of the problem," Amado told Mottaki, "but you can be part of the solution." He told Mottaki pointedly that Iran had the most to lose from its continued isolation.

Press conference

15. (C) Lourenco said Amado's main goal at the press conference was to express strong support for the P5 plus one efforts, and he had been taken aback at how vehemently Amado had done so. The Portuguese foreign minister strongly endorsed the international community's efforts on Iran, mentioning specifically the agreement on a new Security Council resolution text by the P5 plus one gathering in Berlin earlier in the week. He twice emphasized that Iran, as a key player in the Middle East, bears a particular responsibility to fulfill the international community's expectations. Amado lamented that Portugal had been unable to commemorate 500 years of relations with Iran in 2007 because of the political environment. He added that Lisbon would like very much to strengthen bilateral ties, but that would be impossible unless political and strategic conditions changed (comment: according to Lourenco, this was Amado-speak for "we wish we could have a better relationship but Iran is not making that easy.") Asked by a journalist about the meeting in Berlin, Mottaki replied that a new resolution is unnecessary because Tehran is cooperating fully. Amado welcomed the agreement on a new UNSCR text.

16. (C) Pol/econ counselor expressed concern about Mottaki's and Amado's remarks about ongoing discussions between Iran's national oil company and Portugal's principal oil and gas

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company, and said they appeared to be inconsistent with Amado's vow to Amb. Stephenson two days earlier to turn up the heat on Tehran. Lourenco initially lamented that the media reports had focused primarily on those remarks, which he said had consumed only a small part of the press conference. He added that he knew little about the topic, that it was the Ministry of Economy that dealt with such matters. When pressed, Lourenco said Galp, the Portuguese company, was now a private enterprise and that there was little that government could do to control its activities. The MFA's role is to explain to companies the political environment and the potential for additional UN sanctions that might affect them. In short, "our responsibility," Lourenco insisted, is not to prevent companies from involvement in Iran, but rather "not to encourage them." When told that the United States prohibits commercial activities in Iran by American companies, Lourenco replied that there is no UNSC prohibition on general commerce with Iran, and he pointed out that EU partners such as Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom all have "big time business with Iran." Business interests underpin every EU discussion about Iran, and "we are bound by the internal EU debate," Lourenco remarked.

Lunch

17. (C) MEPP: At the subsequent lunch, at which both foreign ministers were joined by five delegation members -- including Lourenco -- Mottaki spoke extensively, with Amado mostly in listening mode. Mottaki was very critical of President Bush's recent trip to the Middle East, insisting that whoever tries to turn the region against Iran will fail. He claimed that the foreign ministers of the countries visited by the President all subsequently travelled to Tehran, and he revealed in taking a call during lunch he claimed was from Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah. Amado replied that the

Annapolis conference had provided a very important opportunity to make progress in the region, and he urged Iran to play a responsible part.

¶8. (C) Iraq: Mottaki was "very upbeat" about Iraq, noting the improved security environment. Asked whether Mottaki had addressed Iran's own involvement in Iraq, Lourenco said he had not. Mottaki did express concern about developments in northern Iraq, saying Iran and Syria would never accept an independent Kurdistan. Asked whether U.S.-Iran talks on Iraq were continuing, Mottaki said they were, and Amado was pleased, describing that channel as "essential."

¶9. (C) Pakistan: Mottaki was "extremely pessimistic" about Pakistan, which he described as moving inexorably toward Talibanization.

Levinson

¶10. (C) Asked whether Amado had raised the case of disappeared Amcit Robert Levinson with Mottaki, Lourenco said he was unsure but would check. He noted that our earlier requests to press the Iranians to share information on their investigation had been passed to the Portuguese embassy in Tehran, at our request, and Lourenco promised to check with Amado to see if the issue was raised during the Mottaki visit.

Comment

¶11. (C) On the nuclear issue, Amado was determined to underscore publicly that Portugal stood with the P5 plus one, and he did so at the press conference in more direct language than he normally uses. His private comments to Mottaki, however, were apparently more typical of Amado's usual cloaking of criticisms in non-confrontational language. Mottaki's remarks on talks between Galp and the Iranian oil company (NOIC) received wide media play here, but Amado's only public comment was that he was aware such discussions had been ongoing for several months. Based on our subsequent conversation with Lourenco, the Portuguese government is unlikely to try to limit possible collaboration unless the UN moves to restrict such commerce, or unless the EU decides to impose autonomous measures, both options which Lourenco saw as unlikely. Nonetheless, we'll continue to press the Portuguese -- including in the Ambassador's call on the MFA political director on January 29 -- to advocate within the EU for stronger steps.
Stephenson